Spectrum

Literary and Fine Arts Magazine

2008

Spectrum
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The Tao of the Bird

the bird came first
in the chicken
in the egg

she laid the bigger bang
poured the boiling seas
sprouting trees with swinging monkeys

she made monogamous geese and swinging dogs
she made the p-i-g hog and the b-l-t food
the w-o man and the m-a-n dude

her jobs and his profits
are they friend or foe?
better dig that hole to the bottom line
better pick that coal or you're doing time

yet the brave new world is going to turn and run
for the bigger money
and the bigger fun
but bigger brother kept the bigger gun

so who do I follow or should everybody lead?
Jesus, Buddha, Krishna,
both Lennons too
Muhammad, Ralph Nader
and the tao Lao Tzu

Tom Hopkins

Lilly (detail) – Matt Heuston

Blood and Iron

Sonic red-hot chunks of iron screaming through the air,
Whirling back down to earth.
Some hit soldiers, shattering their slow-motion nighttime.
Blood and steel: Ironic mixture in a "modern" age.
Tick-tock, crinkling newspapers.
In the quiet of the den, we watch the war.

Daniel Hirschhorn

San Juan, Puerto Rico – Christina Chiddo

Reading

Books can make you go places,
To distant lands or planets.
Anywhere you want to go.
Flying free all the way.
To far-off lands.
It is simple:
Just read
A book.

Stephen Carnaggio

Charcoal Eyes

It was a gray day, the kind people hurry through and rarely remember. Crows crowded the sky, and there was a spicy chill in the air. Caleb sat and tasted the blood on his lip. (Autumn was that time of year when the cold split his skin open, but it was still his favorite season.) He had been sitting in the park for an hour, but nobody had walked past him. Perched on the edge of a narrow bench with a slouch in his back, he looked ill. His white blonde hair was scattered across his eyes, and his glasses sank to the tip of his red nose. The stillness in his fingers spread throughout his body, and he was itching to draw.

His drawings always started with outlines of a generic human form. From there, they would become shadowy expressions and gruesome creatures. He liked to offer his drawings to his subjects once he had finished them, but he found that people didn't like to see themselves in such ways. And so his bedroom was filled with charcoal strangers.

Then, in the distance, Caleb spotted a dot that would soon become a subject. He perked up a bit, and rubbed the slimy charcoal between his fingers to soften its tip. The dot had become a man. The man wore a long dark coat.

A little bit closer, Caleb wished, so he could see the man's face.

The man continued toward him, marching like a soldier. He was older than Caleb. His jaw was set and his lips were grim. Caleb began to sketch.

The man took notice, although it was hardly out of the ordinary to see artists in autumn-lit parks. He stopped in front of Caleb, his shadow spreading across the drawing.

"Excuse me son, but do you know if this park has any water fountains?"

Caleb stared. The man was very tall.

"I don't think they work anymore."

Upon seeing Caleb's face, the man's mouth softened and he offered a smile. "What're you drawing?"

"You," Caleb said with hesitation.

The man chuckled. "I used to paint when I was younger. That is, I wanted to be a painter. I thought myself better than I actually was. My name is Jason, by the way."

Jason sat down. Caleb began to explain his own perspectives on art, and showed him some drawings from his portfolio. Jason was impressed. Their conversation strayed into areas of poetry and novels, films and traveling. When the topic of girlfriends came up, a fresh-faced moon was already pasted in the sky.

"I've never been serious with anyone," Caleb admitted. "I'll get to know a girl, but whenever I go on dates, I feel …" He had to

Tree – Karen Michael

think about how he felt. "Well, I feel like a liar." He then told Jason about the last girl he took to dinner. She wore a siren mouth that spat opinions where pleasant conversation should have been. It was a disaster.

"Ah." Jason turned away for a moment. When he turned back, there was a struggle behind his eyes. "I know how you feel. It's like—"

"Like there's something wrong with me."

"No. No, that's hardly the case. It's like flavors, Caleb. Most people like chocolate. But you're the oddball who prefers strawberry. I do too. You aren't the only one." Jason went silent again and frowned at his shoes. Caleb had the unpleasant feeling that something random was about to happen.

Jason leaned toward him. Their lips touched, and Caleb finished the kiss. At first he felt frightened and lost. Then they kissed again, and he felt something inside of him opening, like a balloon swelling or a rising sun that seemed to melt the fear away. He felt larger than he had ever felt before, and the magic rose up from his gut to his throat. He whimpered. Everything around him was dancing, and the magic was switching everything inside out and upside down so that Caleb didn't care that the fish suddenly twinkled in the sky and the stars danced under water. The whole of Earth's goodness was wrapped up in that kiss, and even the moon had to swoop in for a better look. He never wanted the moment to die.

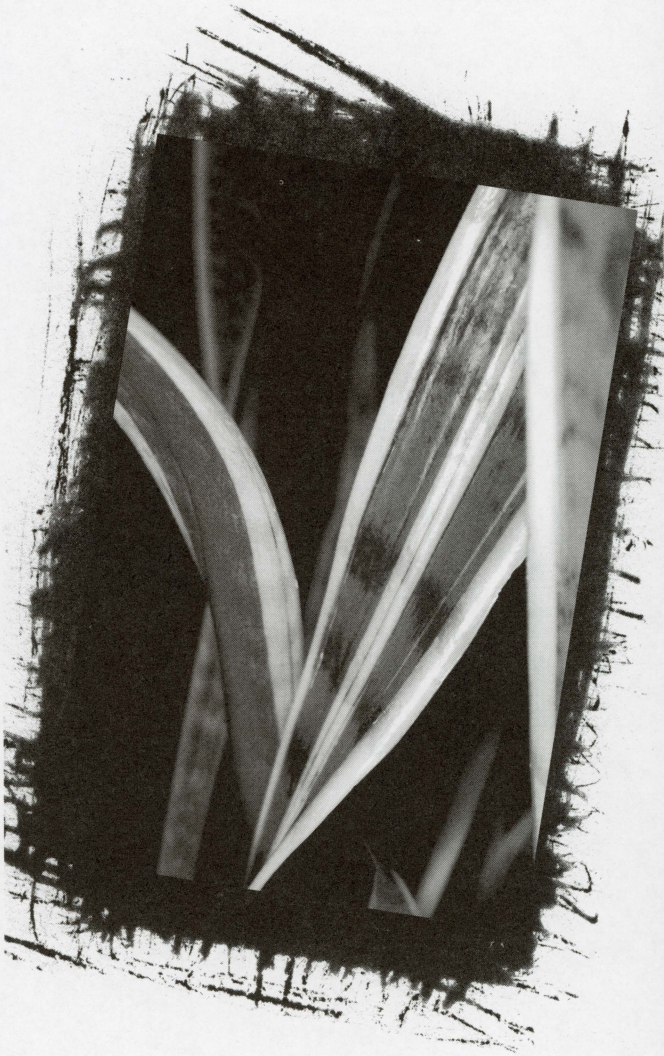
"I'm sorry," Jason pulled away.

"What—" Caleb was breathless.

"You're too young, I shouldn't …" Jason stood up and walked quickly away.

Caleb sat in the aftermath of awe. He sat until the sky was black, until he wasn't sure if Jason had actually been a living, breathing person or if he was just a creature of the mind. He sat until the whole evening made him dizzy and he didn't know what to make of it. Then something fell from his lap. It was the sketch of Jason, and the charcoal eyes were beaming.

Virginia Petrucci



Untitled – Christopher Bielut

Urbanesque

Urban culture takes over one corner at a time
the hard sun glitters glass shards on the sidewalk
and I wonder what disease is creeping into my mind
sitting here 24/7

Child gangs demonstrate violence as the solution
while the future of America sits on the stoop a few doors up
until the smell of garbage in the basement
motivates him

The dealer on the corner provides our only security
and that falling-apart house will get the so-innocent landlord
when rats and mice and roaches, our constant neighbors,
overwhelm the block

Racing traffic entertains, punctuated by sirens every 20 minutes,
while the crackheads and schizoids play basketball in the alley
waiting for their medications dispensed out of windows
from the same van as their drugs

I only feel good with you in the gutter with me
and we're all proud of our gangsta attitudes born of frustration and self-neglect
while intimate family matters ricochet into the street
and babies have babies because they're fucking at 12

I can't let Jesus heal me because I'm drawing disability
and my victimology blows my esteem and trash into dark corners
I deal in cash—can't do a checkbook and can't read
My children might be hungry but I must get my nails done

"Hitcher" Poster (detail) – Lauren Herda

My $60,000 car parks in front of my $20,000 house
until I get killed or go to jail
I beg The Man for money and watch out for
wrong place–wrong time

Children use every foul word—like their parents
the system doesn't care and the parents can't
going to jail is just another solution
just like getting killed

Rabid ignorance transcends color and creed
we are all trapped by the bulletproof glass at the corner grocery
and gunfire in the night settles squabbles
among friends

My unlovely neighbors got ugly
when they bought property and had to move away
the larceny in their nonprofit paid off one handout at a time
while they skimmed their little taste

Life will go on until a six-foot tall 13-year-old
shoots me down in the street for lunch money
But it's not his fault that his only recreation is destruction
and beautiful girl children become practiced pros at 14

It's just the way it is
blame it on who or what you want
But we make choices every day
keeping us right where we belong

David Brannon

Lost – Sarah Elrays

Sleep When

My body like dead weight
The morning chill dead set against me
I renounce late nights.

Day drags on
Incessant yawns
Firecrackers against the back of my eye
"No more late nights." I declare.

9:30 PM
Temptation rings
Drink specials and laughs
But work at eight

Screw it

Plenty of time to sleep
When I'm old.

Patrick McAvoy

Petals

The flowers were this almost ridiculous pink color. Too bright for that place, and why I'd go there. It's not that I didn't feel loved, nothing like that. Just that I missed my mom and dad, when they'd decide, like they did every few months or so, that they didn't want a kid after all, that I wasn't the perfect fashion accessory my mother supposed I'd be, and they'd leave my grandparents to take over for a while.

I spent most of my summers at that house along the ocean, watching the water as it would drift up and down, crashing against the wooden pillars of the pier, losing me in a seasick lullaby. I remember connecting with those pink flowers that lined the sides of the house, feeling ridiculous like them. I belonged there, against the blue-green nothingness of that house and that ocean, just about as much as they did.

In the middle of so many particularly long days, I can remember sneaking over to one of those flower bushes, so oddly coated in pink flora, and when no one else was looking, I'd steal just one petal from one flower. For just a moment I'd stand there, lost in the softness of that petal, lost in my first understandings of innocence and purity. I'd take that soft little petal and hold it so gently, like a small bird I was rescuing, fallen from its nest. I'd take it, and I'd run, so carefully, and make my way to the edge of the wooden pier, the floorboards hot with summer under my feet, and reaching the railing, stretch my arm as far over as I could get. Slowly, I'd open my hand, palm up, facing water that I could only imagine stretched on forever. And I'd let the breeze carry that petal away, first on the wind, then seconds later, on the waves. Carry it far away. To where it belonged.

I'd do this maybe, once every week or so, almost like writing letters home, only to a family I barely even had. And like children do, I believed so fully that when my parents finally did come back for me, seeming to miss me until the next month or the month after that, that it had something to do with that petal I'd freed. It must've found its way back to its real home, just like me.

Finally, when I was little older and starting to understand more of the reasons why my parents disappeared from my life so much, I began to feel anger for the first time in my life. The first chance I got when I was alone at that ocean-front house, I ran outside and in great, raging bursts, I grabbed at those flower bushes, ripping away pink petals in both hands. I bounded toward the edge of the pier, with no respect for the summer-warmed boards under my feet, and threw ravaged handfuls of flowers out into the water.

Hours later, I walked along the beach, trying with every bit of strength, to let it all go, to stop crying, to grow up.

I only stopped for a few seconds to gaze out at the water and follow it back as it rushed in to meet my feet with an icy greeting. And there, grasping at my toes, riding the waves in and out, I found every one of my ridiculous pink petals.

I never tried to save them again.

Amanda Behrens

Ice Breakers – Ellen Egger

Butterfly

Sittin' here wonderin' why
I can't fly
And be as high as the others.
Being smothered
Always undercover to hide my faults and my feelings.
Believing I can fly when no one else believed in me
And no one else tried.
I'm set aside from the rest
Because of my stress to become the best
And yet … my wings start to flutter
No longer sputtering the utterance of pain,
The reaction of the chain.
Born into a family with nothing to gain…
But hope,
Hope for their children to see a better tomorrow today…
Today I become a butterfly.
My family looks at me with hope in their eyes,
Telling me the sky's the limit
And this is the world
You have to make do with what's in it
Grown up to be so mature
Soon opportunity will be knocking at your door
And before you know it
All your hard work will be done
And only then will your battle be won
To become the butterfly you always wanted to be.

Tenae Smith

Feelings

our weakness and strength
my feelings, given to you
you are my strength, my weakness
so, I will forever hold you

Jennifer Hicks

The Dancer – Brittany Wesselhoff

All the Awe Aspiring

Springing sprang the showers of spring
Dancing delightfully in its dutiful delusions.
Indeed I do know, I follow the following frolics.
Do you doubt the duty?
Daring dutiful duty?
Rise up the ramparts of warring wanderings
And call the callous courts to combat,
Knowing that knowledge is nothing without knowing,
Undoubting the undoing of everything.

Stephen Carnaggio

Blank America – Matt Heuston

Untitled – Christopher Bielut

By the Sword

Green mist veils the distance from view.
Faceless white ghosts dance in eternal water,
Endlessly repeating their movements,
Mimicking one another's gesticulations.
And the focus –
That elusive fulcrum –
Is the flickering of silver fish,
Is the sparkling ray of moonlight,
Illuminating our crystal bowl;
And the clashing of tempered steel –
Deafening in the silence
Of the deep –
Echoing forever.
The formless air of the mind –
As foiled, by Stabbing. Pointed. Cessations.
As the teetering hopes in trickling streams.
Bouts of terror,
Hours of patient anticipation
Creating cycles of rote and endless tradition –
Shadows in the twilight
Of a faded dynasty.

Sarah Thomas

That Old 12 Gauge

"This place has always been creepy," I think as I grasp the handle of the old 12 gauge. When I was a kid, I would spend the day with my grandfather, driving around this 100 acre wooded property or shooting various guns at glass bottles in his small shooting range. While my grandfather was shooting, the gun sounded like a symphony from hell, but when I held the gun and pulled the trigger the sound was secondary to the rush that levitated my arms. I always find it odd that, with all the noise of this place during the day, it's eerily quiet at night. I'd sit there in my room with the window open, watching out in the driveway—all I could hear was crickets and bull frogs. Sometimes I'd sneak out with a flashlight and walk through the woods in the dark, I guess to scare myself. I always wanted to fire the gun at night. I wanted to see the explosion of light and sound. Now I hope to hell I don't have to pull this damn trigger.

My grandfather died years ago and his place became mine. Being alone here never settled into a feeling of comfort. I'd sleep in the bedroom my grandfather used to occupy, and I still kept the same old 12 gauge next to the bed. Every little creak of the house or noise outside used to make me jump to my feet and grab that shotgun. It never was anything to be alarmed about until tonight. Tonight I was half asleep when I began to hear the distinct sound of rubber moving across pebbles in the driveway. I saw through the bedroom window a small truck creeping with its lights off, right around the corner of the house, the side near the basement. I instantly started to sweat, but I didn't move an inch. My Jeep was out at the old house, about a half mile away. If they were robbers, they'd think the place was vacant. Then I heard the sound of the back door being busted in. When I heard the screen door slam shut and a distinct conversation, I rolled quietly out of my bed and onto the floor, grabbing that old 12 gauge.

I kept thinking, "Jesus Christ, what the hell am I going to do?" I knew what my grandfather would do. He'd John Wayne his way downstairs and let god sort through the corpses. I didn't see the

Snow Barn – Heather Naff

situation that way; I had no idea who or how many people there were. I heard the footsteps in the next room and heard them going through the drawers. I knew they wouldn't find much. I was crouched ready to start shooting if someone came around the corner and through my door. The gun was positioned on my shoulder and I knew I had four shots.

I saw a shadow creep around the corner, and the sweat began to pour down my face. One footstep after another, then a long pause. I could hear whispering. They were standing outside my room and I bet they were looking right at my bed, realizing that all the other beds were made except this one. I felt something building up in my stomach; I wasn't sure what it was but my breathing slowed. My finger retracted around the trigger and the explosion threw me back onto the floor. The shot rattled the door and nearly took it off the hinges. I reloaded and took my position, but I heard scattering footsteps. I was on my feet rushing down the hall, thinking maybe I was more like my grandfather than I thought. I cleared the stairs quickly and saw the screen door close. I burst through the door out onto the lawn, took aim, and began to fire.

Dan Seubert

Paul Brown – Brittany Wesselhoff

A Book in the Breeze

a book in the breeze, a book in the breeze
my pages torn and blown with the leaves

my words fell out and screamed through the wind
a message lost, the bitter end

and my binding broke, once more i spoke
cried out again until i choked

there was nothing left from which to speak
no ink to bleed, no cause to seek

what could this be if it was not gone
no more of me but the days passed on

sun and moon hopped up and down
joy and fear as shadows frowned

i should leave, i should go
but how and where, what else do i know?

i should move, i should hurry
but where and why, for what do i worry?

a book in the breeze, a book in the breeze
once was i, once was he

and we all blew away
we all ripped apart

and we all fell down
we all lost our hearts

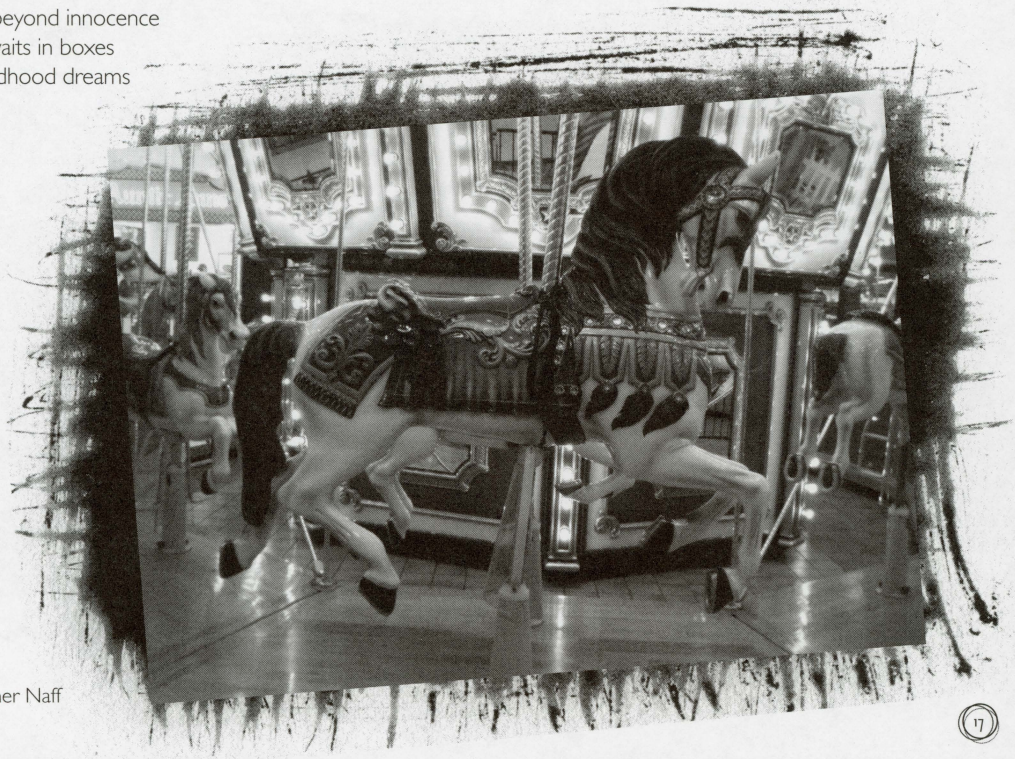
what else do we know
what else do we know?

Cory Zanker

Waltz

We learned to dance for our mothers
We waltz even though they're gone
Soft flesh beneath gentle grasp
Never imagined in elementary productions
Goose step nuns, three/four incarceration
Michelle shivered as we touched
We walked home after practice
She to Dedham, I to Hyde Park.
I to backwoods military games
She to rope skip lemonade afternoons
Not imagining future blood rush embarrassments
When bodies grew beyond innocence
Dusty Strauss now waits in boxes
In basements for childhood dreams
To reawaken.

Jim Curran



Carousel Horse – Heather Naff

Flower – Isabell Triemer

The Party's Over

Fall has arrived,
an unwanted guest
at a summer gathering.

The business hours
of the sun
have changed.

There's no longer a difference
between the wind out there
and the wind in here.

David Glushakow

The Ghost of Rebecca Saunders

You're not the type of girl who would be at a place like this at this time in the morning …

You're a good girl, raised Christian like your parents. You say your prayers every night. You love bunnies. You have a sweetheart named Ricky Corner. You love him too.

Yet here you are, down by the river at two in the morning because Susie Mulligan and the gang dared you to. You hear them behind you giggling and daring you to summon the ghost of Rebecca Saunders, the girl who drowned herself in the river ten years ago.

You shiver in the cold night air while you face the dark river. You're scared, but even more you're afraid of the humiliation you'll receive from now on if you don't do what the girls say.

You close your eyes and step forward into the icy water. Chills and cold stabbing pains run up your entire body. The pain stops, and then there is only the cold … empty … deadness.

"Go all the way underwater and call her name!" Susie shouts from behind you.

You move forward into the deeper water and crouch down until your body is completely submerged. With your eyes closed tightly, you utter the girl's name – though it only comes out in gurgling bubbles. You wait a moment for good measure, so the girls won't doubt you actually said it.

You move to stand up but you can't. You realize there are two hands on your shoulders. You open your eyes and see that the water is filled with a grayish light that illuminates the face in front of you. There before you, just like the old pictures you've seen, is Rebecca Saunders' face. But her skin is completely pale. Her eyes are white.

You let out a gurgling scream and struggle to free yourself from her grip. She doesn't move. She just stares and holds you down.

Your lungs can't hold out much longer. It begins to hurt. You claw madly at the pale figure before you. The pain swells in your chest as you run out of breath. Your body grows weak and limp. The pain stops. There is only the cold … empty … deadness.

Lisa Golabowski

Accident

It wasn't much to look at,
But it drew a good size crowd.
Twisted fragments, bits of glass,
Eighteenth Street, Anywhere, Sunday, August 9th

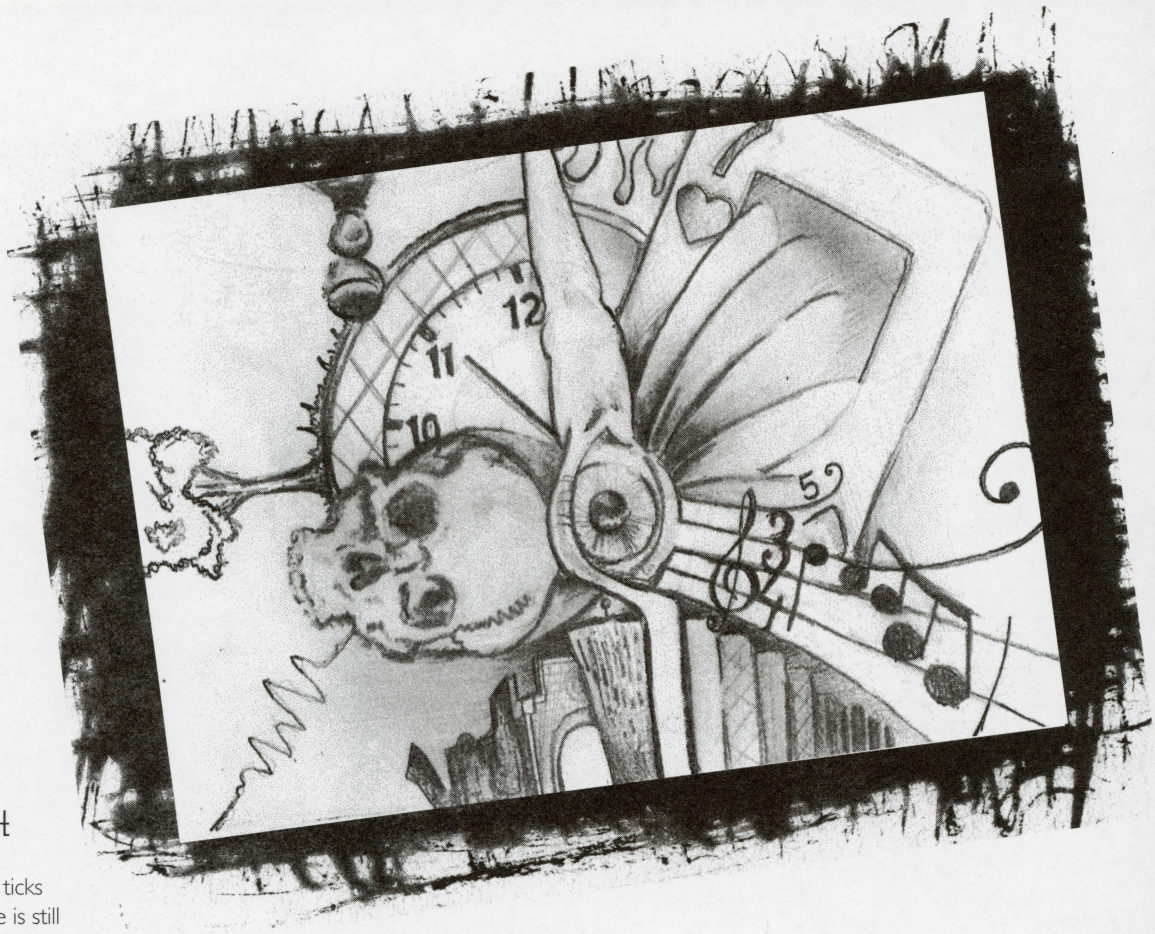
A hush befell those scraping sidewalks clean.
One spot remained, a monument of sorts,
Which would wash away by Tuesday,
By rain, predicted on the news.

Left, unseen in the sewer.
A shoe, thrown from the foot of a passenger.

Will I understand what drew me there?
Standing before the fire,
Warming my face, above shredded flesh;
Murmuring: "I'm glad it wasn't me."

Jim Curran

Broken – Sarah Elrays



Apart

A clock ticks
But time is still
The end of hope
A loss of will.
The earth is turning
But distance remains
A soul weighed down
With anvil and chains.

Every moment is eternity
When I need someone beside me.

Kaydee Carr

Sketch – Eric Bach

Unfinished Business

I saw her last night. She stood, backlit, wearing nothing but a smile and drowning me in her dark, wide-set eyes. She stepped to the bed and placed a hand on the mattress. I felt the bed move as she leaned over, offering a soft kiss, a caress of her silken skin, and so much more. My body reacted to the tilt of the mattress and I awoke, reaching out into dark, cold emptiness.

* * *

It was just another dream. A dream of Cindy, the woman who loved me. And who was compelled to leave me after five short, glorious years.

Our initial attraction was lustful adventure. Soon, we discovered the simpatico that glued us together on a practical level. I was learning my craft as a photographer and I wanted to get her in front of a camera. She readily agreed.

Normally, I expected to throw away the first role of film when working with an inexperienced model. I positioned Cindy for the first frame and walked back to the camera. When I looked through the viewfinder, her pose, posture and expression were perfect.

"You've done this before."

"I was runner up in the Miss Pennsylvania pageant and I've done a lot of pictures for promotions and some advertising."

Her first sitting produced remarkably powerful and beautiful images of a strong, intelligent woman, unintimidated by being the center of attention and the object of my desire. She quickly became my studio assistant, seeing things that would detract from a photo and contributing her instinctive sense of what looked good on film. She had a natural ease and grace in the studio that made people relax while doing the shoot.

What impressed me most was her absolute fearlessness in front of a camera and in social situations. Her impeccable sense of color, style and self-packaging always worked in her favor. And she enjoyed drawing attention to herself. Even though we were only the photographers for an event, she dressed as elegantly as anyone did at the affair. Her beauty, charm and openness made it easy to get shots of people who otherwise might have refused to cooperate. Once, at an awards banquet, Joe Frazier, the heavyweight boxing champion, stopped by to schmooze with the crowd. Cindy almost upstaged him by boldly approaching and asking him for a hug. He looked a little perplexed, but obliged her none the less.r

* * *

I saw her again last week, at the mall. She was older, maybe sixty, wearing young-woman's styles and bright, appealing colors. She was with a man and another couple. The man, obviously her husband, was balding and mildly overweight. He exuded an air of a lifetime of professional success and a pleasant indulgence of his chatty, attention-hungry wife.

Her blond hair was even thinner than when she was young and appeared unruly in her attempt to tie it in a ponytail with a Caribbean-bright ribbon. She was dressed in khaki shorts and a colorful, silk blouse that was unbuttoned a bit too low. She danced between dominating the conversation and being the social director of the group. Blissfully unaware of the attention she was drawing to herself, she smiled, praised and promoted her companions into sharing her limelight.

I smiled as their pleasant whirlwind passed by. They were comfortable, secure, and self-assured. It was exactly the life I imagined for Cindy and was happy to see her in it.

The one rule she insisted on when we were first married was that we would not sacrifice present enjoyment for future security. The only

way to accomplish that was to earn enough money and build an asset base as early as possible. And Cindy was more than willing to make her contribution.

We went house-hunting and she found one that looked good on paper. The driveway curving to the two-car garage immediately caught my attention, as did the southern colonial styling of the tall white columns and broad cornice accenting the front of the two-story house. It had four bedrooms, a family room with fireplace, walk-in closets and a full bath in the master bedroom.

Then we took a closer look. The house had been empty for several months and the yard, while large and level in front and gently rolling away in back, looked more like a pasture. The seller was a widower with four grown boys and the refugee paint and plaster showed how much abuse a house could take. We learned later that they kept exotic (un-house broken) animals and did virtually no maintenance for years. At some point, the house was struck by lightening, blowing out the fuse box and setting fire to the framing boards under the dining room floor. The burnt floorboards had been removed but never replaced. And they were asking only $120,000.

Getting into the car, I thought, "Here's another one we can write off."

As soon as the seatbelts were fastened and the engine started Cindy said, "I love it. This is the one I want!"

While I was recovering my voice, she waxed eloquent about all the wonderful things we could do with the house. I felt like Garp's wife, just after the plane crash.

We bought it for $102,000 and three years later it appraised for $170,000. This was another of Cindy's gifts that I learned to trust.

* * *

I saw her again, in a restaurant this time. She was achingly young, fragile looking and beautiful. She was with a man and two children. The man was dark and primitive looking, as were the children. I could not imagine that group being together, much less being a family. Their lives looked hard and full of drudgery. This was not at all what she would have worked for or what she deserved.

When the group got up from the table, I could see her sense of fashion and style carried on. She walked tall and proud, her thin blonde hair purposely exploding in a halo about her face. Her clothes were of light materials shaping themselves to her young body. The colors of her short skirt and vest were slightly subdued, matching her station in life. She was not intentionally the center of attention, but her beauty shone through and for one who was eager to recognize it, she could capture his heart.

Late Night – Matt Heuston

Cindy suffered only one fashion failure. She was small breasted and one summer day wore an elastic-gathered top that was only a loose red fabric. While passing through a crowd, she heard someone make a rude comment that she was, "… a very pretty boy." It hurt, and her pride and sense of style were threatened. She decided that day to get implants. Never again would anyone mistake her for being less than the woman she was.

She sought the recommendation of many people and settled on a physician in a nearby city. She was excited about the prospects and fairly beamed the day she came home from the doctor.

"Doctor Barnes showed me before and after pictures of women he had done and I really liked what I saw. He told me all about the procedure, how long it would take, what we would have to do for several weeks after and how much it would cost. And then he took pictures. I thought he would take pictures only from the waist up, but they did full-body nude shots. I was surprised he needed them."

She always enjoyed doing nudes in the studio, and I was convinced she would be happy soaking in the sun of a nudist colony on a Florida beach. I had the impression the doctor got pictures that were more than clinical.

A week later, her enthusiasm turned to dust and terror. As part of the clinical work-up, the doctor took breast x-rays. He saw something that didn't look quite right and had a radiologist give him an opinion. The report came back: Stage Two Cancer. He recommended an immediate diagnostic work-up.

Instead of becoming even more of the beauty she was, she now confronted the possibility of disfigurement, agonizing medical treatment, even death. The diagnostics foretold the brutality of her coming treatment. She no longer had a lifetime before her; suddenly she lived impatiently between treatments and surgeries. She had no time to waste, yet the disease and its treatment wasted her away before my eyes. And a scant ten months later, she was gone.

* * *

I still enjoy seeing her from time to time, in restaurants and theaters, in a park or walking down the street. I see her as she was and as she might have been, with dogs and children and people I don't know, but who look right for her. And every time, she is smart, and beautiful, and well-packaged, and always the center of attention.

It's been twelve years now since I laid her to rest. But sometimes, I wish she were dead. Really, really dead.

David Brannon

The Invective of a Horseman

I will have him yet,
Not just soon but now,
That long-legged scarecrow
With receded brow.

I will have my pride back
As I chase through the hills.
He had love, life, a stature;
I'll make him scream shrill.

And the hound will be upstaged
With this moonlit chorus crazed.
I laugh as his horse falters
As he looks about him dazed.

No salt will keep me from him;
He's too terrified to throw.
As I fly upon his flank,
He does not have a sword to show.

His blood runs chill with sight of me,
"Hallou! Hallou! Who might you be?"

I will not answer.
Let his courage fail.
Let him lay to his horse
With cold spurs and flail.

Like pages from his broken books,
The black leaves fly from under.
Over the marks of death,
Our frothing horses thunder.

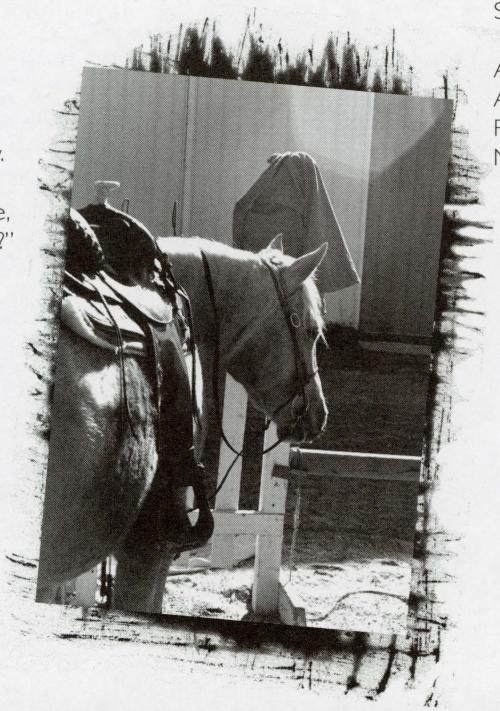
I will show a weak, learned man
There's no room for him to stay.
With the ending of this match,
He won't have a face to pray.

I will teach him well.
I'll breathe down his neck,
Just a few feet more but
By his luck I am checked.

My time is up, his time has come;
I must turn away.
The night for ghosts is gone;
Silvered bell has struck day.

A parting gift I give him,
A face to burn 'til morn,
Richer, ripened and hollow,
Not the face with which I was born.

Ashley VanderLoop



Intent on Training – Kelly Strine

Loretta Lynn – Jessica Winters

...ugly, but beautyfull

I hurried off carefree
Happy and pretty but
Concealed under my baby fat
Free as the bird
Oblivious to everything but my own world
The world I live in
All others are non-existent
Then, I was only a child.

Now,
I walk carefully
Sullen and beautiful
In full bloom of my adolescence
Inhibited by society
Knowing too much and too well
Things and people around me.
The world of the people
My world is fading
And the beauty I used to enjoy
Now becomes a plague
I wish I was ugly,
But beautyfull!

Zainab Ogunbajo

Pretty Dragon Ballsy!

Allison had lifted her head from her desk and looked at the clock in the small corner of her PC. It was ten o'clock and finally it marked the end of a horrible Thursday. Allison collected her things from around the office and strolled out of the building toward her car, arms overflowing with books, papers and reports. She started the car and pulled away from campus to begin the long drive home.

The drive home on those long Thursdays always seemed twice as long as any other day. This was mostly because of the hours Allison kept. Four hours of class, then eight of work, it was murder. It didn't help that by this time Simon and Allen had already been home for hours enjoying their free time.

Allison pulled into the apartment complex, gathered her things, and trudged into the apartment. She dropped her effects promptly in the bedroom and plopped down next to her two friends who were watching television, happy as fools.

"What are you watching?" Allison asked.

Simon responded quickly, "*Star Wars.*"

"Ah crap. Can't we watch something interesting?" Allison asked.

"Yeah, *Star Wars* is the wonderfully crafted epic coming-of-age story where a young man has to not only fight external enemies trying to claim his body, but internal demons trying to claim his *soul*!" Allen barked as if needing to explain the greatness of *Star Wars* to anyone was the height of inconvenience.

"Whatever," Allison chided and stood up to retire to her room for the night.

A week passed and Allison had just barely survived another brutal Thursday. She got into her car to make the trek home. When she arrived at her apartment, her two roommates were already on the couch, tickled pink with their choice of programming.

National Cathedral, DC – Christina Chiddo

"What are you watching?" Allison asked, dropping her tired body into the couch.

"*Ghost Hunters*!" Allen responded in elation.

"*Ghost Hunters*. . ." Allison grunted miserably. "Why? It is by far the dumbest show on the air."

"The dumbest? Or the most brilliant!" Simon replied.

"The dumbest," Allison said sharply. "All they do is run around in the dark with thousands of dollars of video equipment, trying to record figments of their own imagination."

"Exactly! Isn't it a little too similar to thousand of guys running around in the desert with millions of dollars worth of weapons trying to fight a metaphorical concept! It's the perfect political allegory for the failed war on terror!" Simon reasoned and then shared a high five with Allen. Allison grumbled and went to bed.

On the third Thursday, Allison was thoroughly exhausted, more so than the previous two Thursdays. She drove home, entered her apartment, frustrated by the sight of her two roommates bouncing up and down on the sofa like children, watching "*Dragon Ball Z*."

"Are you kidding me?" she demanded. "What are you going to tell me this time? That this is some brilliant insight to the inner working of the male mind? Or is it some metaphor for Jesus?" Allison was in full shout.

Allen looked at her cautiously and replied. "No, it's a guy bare knuckle boxing a twelve-story ape."

"What possible reason would you want to watch that?"

Allen and Simon looked at each other confused and then looked back toward Allison.

"Because, it's awesome."

David Friend

Slowly But Suredly

A falling star from the sky
Twinkles down to the earth.
Falling freely into the water.
Slowly but suredly the water drips,
Falling deep inside this lagoon.

Time slipping away,
As the steady stream of water drips down,
Slowly each one ticks away a lifetime,
A small piece of me flows into each drop,
Eventually taking with it my soul.

It seals away my pain in every drop.
Releasing me from this anguish,
A relief, I feel is only temporary.
I fall into this water slowly but suredly.

Brendan Therres

Game of Life

Space and time circling
Around us;
Trapped in a vortex of
Work, mastery, wallowing, and mayhem.
Who catches us when we fall?

Seasons travel bringing the
New and curious.
They then leave as abruptly as they came.
And Eliot proclaims: "Do I dare
Disturb the universe?"

Why not try?
For the universe disturbs us everyday;
Shakes us up and puts us down,
Forces us into the oven and decides when
We're done.

Wrestles with us till the sky blacks out;
Then morning comes and the fight resumes.
Black and blue, we trudge through this life,
Each a victim of some internal crime.
Story changes with each passing face.

Tears fall, anger builds, some
Sit idly watching the days pass by.
After all the strife and surviving,
Lessons learned, the settling and
Moving on.

We never actually make
It out alive.
Funny way this life plays out;
Tricking, playing, disguising
Itself to us.

Julie Presley

Summer of Deceit – Jessica Winters

Untitled

My favorite spot is
feathers above
feathers below
wrapped in 75
breezes
gummy bears
sunflower seeds
a cup of lemonade
half-seen sunshine
smiles to the side
a cotton cape drape
playful pinches
between 75
cable channels
comfortable clothes
and a few more
things

including

you.

Stefani Beser

Try Harder Next Week

I had been duped. It had been almost five months since I graduated from college and still no job. I had knocked at the door of opportunity for five months and opportunity was not home. As I lay in bed with a bad hangover, I realized that it was two o'clock in the afternoon and I should get something to eat or I would get really sick. I got dressed and combed my hair to get it looking like I was not completely crazy. I took my time, mentally preparing myself for an hour-long inquisition.

It was Saturday and both my parents were home. Because I usually went to bed around the time they got up, Saturdays were one of the few days that we saw each other. Like every Saturday for the past four months, they wanted to know if I had gotten a job. Every Saturday when I told them no, they would say, "Try harder next week." But last week my father said, "By next week, you better have a job."

I walked downstairs and into the kitchen where my parents were eating lunch. As I sat down and put my head in my hands, I felt nauseated by the hardboiled eggs my father was eating. "Sandy, get him a cup of coffee." The coffee seemed to alleviate the stench of the eggs. My mother served me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich along with a side of apple sauce. I picked up the sandwich and pushed aside the plate of apple sauce. The sight of the apple chunks brought back the nauseous feeling.

I consumed the sandwich in silence. My enjoyment of this momentary silence ended when my father opened his mouth. "You have a job yet?" I shook my head, looking at the last bite of the sandwich. My father's lips tightened as he shook his head and ground his teeth. My mother's hands appeared on his shoulders.

"Just relax, Bernie. Alex has been trying hard. Haven't you, Alex?" While rubbing my father's back, my mother encouragingly nodded her head at me.

"Yeah," I said. My father put his hand through his hair and continued to shake his head. It was hell waiting for something to be said. One minute I was enjoying my sandwich and the next minute I was waiting for my dismissal.

"All right … It's obvious that you need money. Monday you *will* apply to at least three places, but that's Monday and today is Saturday. The lawn needs to be cut and the gutters need to be cleaned, so I suggest you go upstairs and change

Art Piranhas – Lauren Herda

your clothes because you're going to get dirty."

"I'll do it tomorrow. I'm not feeling well," I said.

"Let me get you some Tums," my mother said.

"Tums! I'll tell you what he needs, he needs to get his ass kicked," my father growled.

That was it. I was able to slide out of the kitchen and up to my room. My mother just had to say "Tums" and that was my get out of jail card.

The muffled arguing did not prevent me from getting to sleep; however, the lawnmower woke me up. After the third time, I became enraged. I walked down stairs and out the door. "Are you feeling better?" I heard my mother say.

As I stepped outside, the grass between my toes made me realize I had forgotten to put on my shoes. This did not stop me from walking around the house to find my father and than damn lawnmower.

"Why the hell do you have to do this now? I'm exhausted and can't sleep!"

"I have to do this now because my son is too damn lazy to do anything that would contribute to the household he's mooching off of! As for you being exhausted, try and get to bed before the sun rises!" my father yelled.

"I don't have to take this shit, I'm out of here!" I rushed into the house, up the stairs, past my mother, into my room. My wallet and keys were the only things I took. In the car, the roughness of the pedal felt good against my bare foot.

David Glushakow

Fennec Fox – Arden Haley

My Journey with Psychiatric Nursing

Early morning, darkness soaked from wall to wall,
All lights turned off, no footsteps, one chair in the hall;

A fragile figure seems to be growing out of that tampered seat,
No name, nor face, no arms, nor feet.

A patient? A diagnosis? An illness? A trouble?
No—a sister, or a dad, a cousin or a brother.

A name is a name, a medical case is a case,
My patients are people—with feelings and a face;

Distinct in own way, but all needing care,
Weathered skin, sunken eyes, feelings of distress and despair.

The figure in the chair begins to move, how could this be?
It's true, the figure is a person—like you and me.

Her eyes yearn for solace, her mind for a break,
Her voice searches for an ear, and an opinion—unfake.

In a world of confusion, ups, downs, ins and outs,
She turns to me, yes me, no words spoken, yet I hear her shouts.

Her mouth remains closed, but "Help me," I hear,
My mouth remains closed, I graze her arm, she feels, "Have no fear."

Nonverbal communication began our relationship, you see,
For without good rapport, words are not understood, they simply flee;

That day I gave support, I felt her pour out her heart,
I educated, I advocated, and as a student nurse, I got my start…

Genna Dawson

Untitled – Christopher Bielut

Prayer – Mechelle White

Creating

I think many things.
I put pencil to paper.
A story is born.

Stephen Carnaggio

Sweet Sacrament

Sweet sacrament of bread and wine,
The only meal for my soul to dine,
Before You I kneel, in awe of You I stand,
All to revere the Lamb that was slain on Calvary's land.

That I'm thankful is a statement too light,
To show I'm grateful for my soul's delight:
That bread turned flesh, and wine turned blood,
And that God-given privilege to witness it home or abroad.

In humility You leave Your heavenly glory,
To help us partake of that first-supper story,
Re-witnessed in our presence, at the invocation of Your priest,
Whose vocation Your glory has increased.

(This poem was written after meditation on the Holy Eucharist received at Holy Mass.)

Telima Olungwe

Jon and Tony

We sat on my front step, tossing acorns out into the yard, enjoying the quiet summer afternoon. We'd sat here so many times before, waiting for his mom to pick him up. Whether we were on my step waiting for his mom or his step waiting for my mom, we laughed and played, trying to make the fun last as long as we could.

Today, though, we weren't sitting here as two three-year-olds, eight-year-olds, thirteen-year-olds or seventeen-year-olds. Today we sat as two twenty-year-olds, laughing about how we got here.

"Dude," I asked with a laugh, "Do you have any idea what Mrs. H's real last name was?"

"No clue, man. My mom doesn't even remember."

Three Years Old

I crawled through the maze of yellow, red and blue while others played elsewhere on our preschool playground. I thought I was alone in this maze. He must have thought that, too. When we turned the corner and ran into each other, we were scared for just a second until we started laughing.

"I'm Tony," he said.

"I'm Jon," I replied, as I had an amazing idea. With all the excitement and simplicity of a three-year-old I asked, "Hey, wanna be friends?"

Tony was just as excited. Together we crawled out of that maze and into the world.

"Hey, remember third grade, when Mrs. Offley made us write letters to ourselves?"

"Yeah, I got mine in the mail a couple months ago." Tony laughed, adding, "Nothing really changed, all it said was 'I am Tony, my best friend is Jon, I like videogames, goodbye.'"

Eight Years Old

By third grade, Tony and I were a package deal. Everyone else was an individual person, but we were always "Jon and Tony." You couldn't have one without the other. We understood each other the way no one else could, the way no one else probably would. One look spoke to the other as well as a full conversation.

We tortured Mrs. Offley with our childish games, but she adored us. Our proudest moment came the day we wore matching outfits and switched seats to trick the poor woman. It didn't matter to us that the only thing we had in common was the bowl cut every other boy our age had. I was a short, white boy and he was a tall, Asian kid. Still, we thought our trick was brilliant.

When we weren't at school, we were usually at Tony's house where his dad built us a tree house. After a long, hard day of riding bikes and playing with the dog, we would retreat to that room built for two. We'd escape to a world free of parents and sisters and schoolwork, a world for drinking juice and reading Goosebumps *books. We might even say a swear word or two.*

Nothing could stop us.

"Hey, I drove by your dad's house the other day… So, like, does he think he's Scarface, or what?"

Tony couldn't stop laughing. "Yeah, the iron gates and the little gargoyles or whatever they are? It used to be such a nice house."

Thirteen Years Old

By middle school, things were changing. Instead of matching outfits, we each found our own style. Tony wore darker, skater-punk clothing and I stuck with jeans and nice shirts. Tony's priorities were the competition of gym class and the social world of the lunchroom. My priorities were my classes and the deeper, emotional connections between friends.

On the surface we might not have looked like friends, but our friendship endured, growing even stronger. Tony kept an eye out for me in the cafeteria and gymnasium, and always appreciated my friendly reminders of homework assignments and due dates. That's the way Tony and I worked: He made sure we had fun, and I made sure we wore helmets.

"I gotta go to Tori's. She's probably wondering where I am. You got anything to do? You should come meet her." He smiled and added, "You'll like her."

"Let's rock and roll."

Seventeen Years Old

Two years had gone by since Tony's mom left her home and family, and no one knew where she was. Tony and his dad stopped getting along these two years after Miss Helen left. The only thing his dad had done for him since she left was buy him a car, a yellow 2004 Mercury Cougar, with about $1000 more put into it after-market.

By our senior year of high school, Tony and I were two different people. Tony was into cars, lifting weights and not much else. I was college bound and interested in music. Despite all this, we were still well known as 'Jon and Tony.'

After graduation Tony and I lost touch. My only contact with him was through his girlfriend. Once they broke up, I lost Tony. I thought about him often. For eighteen years Tony only felt close to his mother, his girlfriend and me. Now, he was out there somewhere with none of us.

Three summers later, I was driving home from Ashley's house one afternoon. Instead of taking the highway home, I took Bel Air Road. At the final red light, I looked out my window and saw Tony in his Cougar, staring at me with his head tilted, one eyebrow raised, and lips pursed. This look said, "Where the hell have you been and what took you so long to look left?"

I looked back with my mouth wide open, my forehead wrinkled and ticked my head to the right. That look said, "Damn, what are the odds? Follow me."

We went back to my house and sat on my front step, tossing acorns out into the yard, enjoying the quiet summer afternoon, two twenty-year-olds, laughing about how we got here.

JonEnglebrecht

Craftsmanship – Kelly Strine

Serotonin

Sweety measures the success of her daily life by how many clean baskets of laundry she can decorate with urine. Aside from this fondness for destruction, my velvet-haired cat's favorite activities include rigorous vomiting, a nightly bestowal of lip and eye scratches to all deserving humans, and shedding rings of black lace on all the nice furniture. Despite these dysfunctional tendencies and nasty temperament, she is a gem.

* * *

Sweety did not earn her name. It was chosen for her by seven-year-old logic before I even laid eyes on her: *kitten=sweet*. At only eight weeks old, we welcomed her as the second feline member of our family. She was a warm black ball with white booties that capped each foot, and a white tuft under her chin that looked like evidence of a milk meal. And then there were those endless curiosities: her fondness for playing fetch, how she sat neatly in the palm of my hand when held with outstretched fingers, and the way her tail, exaggerated in size for her small frame, would loop sleepily onto her back so that she looked like a trotting teacup.

Mornings began with her royal gold eyes. Feeling her weight on my chest, I would wake to find my silent alarm clock staring down into my face, often transfixed by my blonde bangs. Although her steady presence became a part of my waking routine, she didn't always join me at bedtime. Sometimes she was escorted, all claws and cries, by my mother. Other times she came voluntarily, tired from a day of playing with shadows.

One night, wrapped in her heavy purrs, I could sense that sleep was near. Toying with her ears, I recollected the day's events. My mother and I had given Sweety her first (and last) bath. The aftereffects were hilarious: her long fur had been sleeked back so that she looked like an oily alien, and she waddled from the weight of the water. We decided to entrust Sweety with her own hygienic maintenance from then on.

Then I thought of how I would protect Sweety from future baths and danger in general; how I would never, ever, *ever* let anyone hurt my fuzzy darling. Moments later, my mind betrayed this resolution in an explosion of mental horrors: my bone white hands around her neck, wringing away her life; the magician's hat I stuffed over her head, snuffing out her voice forever. A fit of tears followed.

"It was just a dream," shushed my mother. Although I had sought her embrace moments earlier, I instantly drew away. The feeling swelling inside me was a mix of questions and dread. *How can I be trusted with kids of my own if I always have these thoughts?* My mother showed me back to bed—a genuine attempt at reassurance.

* * *

Two years later. Butterscotch—part golden whippet, part sad-eyed greyhound—rolled and groaned on the living room floor. I sat next to her, rubbing her white belly. She and I had a unique friendship (much to dog-

hating Sweety's chagrin) and I had resolved never to tell anyone her secret: she possessed magical powers. What kind? It didn't matter. I witnessed it during many a hilltop sunset. Like a dreamy seraph, she would stand with her nose to the wind, even if there were no wind. She was savoring some kind of canine nostalgia. Then, with her brown eyes still carrying a bit of sunset, she would turn and wink at me. I'd smile, and she'd return the facial contortion. Now she lay peacefully by my side, her heart beating under my palm. Then the knife, and my hands thrusting it deep into her gut, again and again, destroying the moment.

* * *

When psychologists run out of good advice before a session is over, they still fish for things to say. For example: "Whenever you have these thoughts, just ignore them. Do something you like; draw a picture." So I tried to ignore the images, or "intrusive thoughts" as they are so strangely called. (How can something coming from inside your own head be intruding?) That quite obviously didn't work. What began as a simple quest to fix my faulty mind became a grand tour of the world of psychology and then psychiatry. I remember a sea of faces, all asking the same questions, all spouting behavioral and pharmacological remedies, all clueless.

* * *

Luvox is the brand name for fluvoxomine maleate, a drug that selectively inhibits the re-uptake of one's serotonin. In common English, these pills help to treat depression and anxiety disorders such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (never mind the minor side effects such as mania and histrionic personality disorder). Luvox and I had a few good years together. No more rain clouds—social phobia, intrusive thoughts, compulsions, etc, etc. These pills were not taken; they were worn like a mask.

There is something equally tempting and troubling about psychopharmacology. When wearing pills, a portion of the Self—the dangerous, inappropriate, undesirable, or dysfunctional—is kept under lock and key, while the rest is supposedly left alone. Within a week or less, Luvox ties up the loose mental ends and reintroduces its user, all smiles, to the world. But what of the original Self? Released from the clutch of medication, it emerges unchanged, unimproved, and angry. This re-acquaintance is politely referred to as "withdrawl".

* * *

Sweety, now a tough old matriarch, is no longer the victim of my thoughts. My boyfriend is the most frequent recipient of knife wounds, explosive devices, and all kinds of trashy death scenarios. All of this cruel imagery is a strange indicator of true love—the more these thoughts disturb me, the more I must value the person who my mind is harming—and without it, I wouldn't be able to reap the benefits of O.C.D.: a clean apartment, attentive study habits, and careful budgeting skills. If anything, mental intrusions give my brain character. Yes, my neurons are challenged in the serotonin department, but they define who I am. If we all cloak our mental mishaps in normalcy, what will become of individuality?

Virginia Petrucci

Moving On

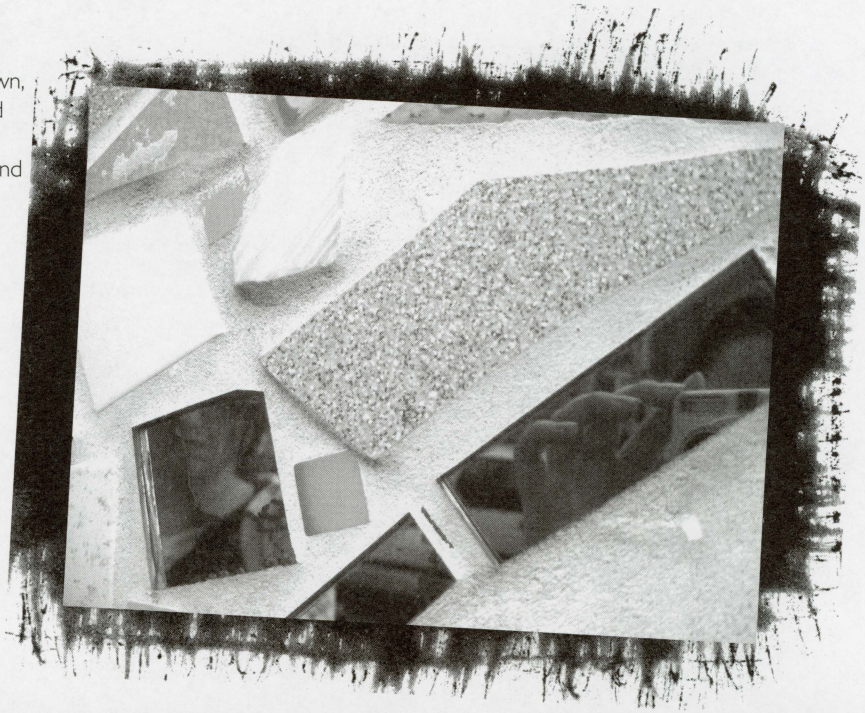
the sea will weep when your ship sinks
the clouds will fall, the sun will blink,
the world will scatter, splattered ink
and tears of rain, the earth will drink

but while all around you mourns the loss
your dreams will shine on the line you cross
your first step stands for something true
you've left your body, broken through

bittersweet, tearful eyes
a soul so lost without disguise
there are no lies where you will rise
perfection in the endless skies

so don't look down, not a fear, not a frown,
not a harmful sight, not a daunting sound
never again will you feel the ground
you will come together as it is all unwound

Cory Zanker



Philly Mosaics – Brittany Wesselhoff

Slow

A slow, sweet haze
Over a wondrous sky
Slow to fade
Slow to change

The soft touch of her lips,
a slow caress of her skin
under the night sky

A night to remember,
This girl so tender.

Brendan Therres

Dogwood – Heather Naff

Pretty (detail) – Isabell Triemer

The Flight

The flight was only three hours in when Sandra woke up. She had been leaning against her brother, her thick brown hair acting as a pillow, so she awoke when he got up for the restroom. The plane was headed for London. It would be Sandra's first time in London, and she was very excited. She was going with her brother to help him look at apartments in the city. She hoped that she had dressed smartly. His new job had transferred him to a London branch, so he'd need a place to stay sorted out before next spring. Sandra was just happy to come along and help out. She and her brother quarreled terribly growing up; once they both reached their twenties, however, a sort of friendly companionship arose between them. Sandra smiled faintly out the window to her right, squinting slightly in the sunlight above the clouds.

Across the aisle, Jared saw the younger girl smile. It reassured him, for a moment. Flying always made him incredibly nervous, and this flight was no exception. It certainly didn't help that he was flying alone. He was coming back from the conference in New York where he was the only representative from London. Usually, his coworker, Janice, would join him and ease his mind on the flight. She would talk about her family and funny things she noticed at the conference, distracting him from their journey through the skies. Much to Jared's dismay, she was attending her cousin's wedding this week and would be in France for the rest of September. He had tried to strike up conversation with the older woman beside him but had no such luck. She was busy with her crossword and not at all talkative.

Agnes always took her crossword booklet when she flew. She also took it with her for long train rides and when she visited her son in New York, mostly because the trips always involved a lot of train riding and plane flying. She only partly brought them to relieve boredom. Mostly, she despised conversing with strangers on public transportation. There were so many criminals out there these days; you never knew when one was going to strike. Agnes didn't like chatting about the weather or what-have-you, so she pretended to be fully immersed in her booklet. The nervous-looking man next to her tried to talk to her at the beginning of the flight but hadn't bothered her since. He didn't seem like a criminal, sitting very upright in his navy business suit, but they never do. She had seen him watching the young girl across the isle of the plane. Perhaps he was thinking of stealing the girl's wallet. Agnes committed the man's face to memory, just in case he perpetrated a crime on the plane. Then she began to slowly doze off and softly snore.

Lilly saw the old lady doze off and wondered why old people slept so darn much. Her baby sister Sarah never even slept as much as all the old people! Lilly turned to her daddy, typing away on his laptop, to ask him why old people sleep so much, but a look from her mother across from him stopped her. Instead, she got up and sat on her mom's lap. She asked her mom why, for the hundredth time, they were going to London in the middle of September. Her mother, exhausted with the little girl

Rose Marker – Ellen Egger

and the baby in her lap, reminded Lilly that there are fewer people going to London in September, so it's easier for the whole family to go. The answer satisfied Lilly, for the time being, so she began asking her mother questions about how planes fly. Her mother then told her to go sit in her seat and try to sleep the rest of the plane ride. Lilly did as her mother asked and went back to her seat behind the sleeping lady. Lilly thought the old lady looked like she was dead. Her hair was even white, like a skeleton's head. She wanted to tell her mom about it, but her mom took Sarah to change her again.

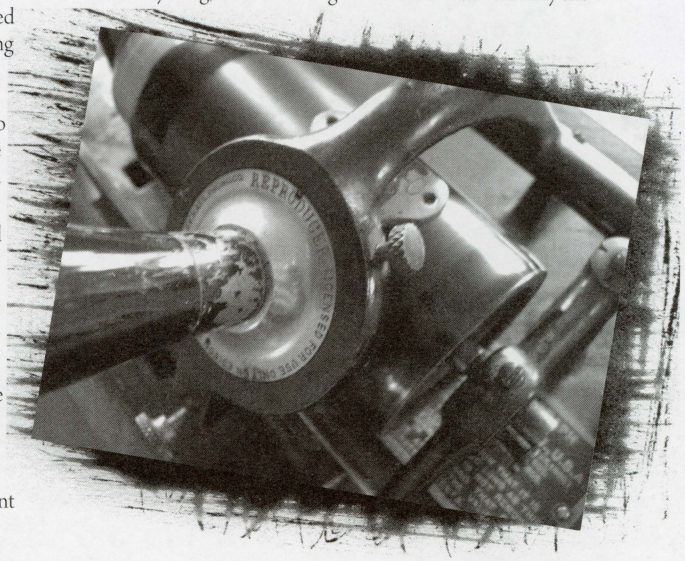
George passed the woman carrying the baby on his way back from the restroom. He did not understand why someone would bring an infant abroad. The child wouldn't remember the voyage, and nannies have to be less expensive. It was nearly impossible for him to pass the woman, as she was carrying the child and a diaper bag the size of three infants. Eventually he got past her and made his way back to his seat. When he got there, he told his sister, who had been looking out the window, to make sure that his apartment in London is not near any children's parks or playgrounds. Sandra made a noncommittal noise—she knew how much he disliked children and hoped there was some lady out there who shared his feelings on the subject. George had spotted the little girl across the isle when they had first found their seats on the plane and groaned. Sandra didn't think that the girl had been a bother at all, but George seemed ready to say something every time the little girl had climbed onto her mother's lap just across the isle. There were some things Sandra and George would never agree on.

Jared saw the younger man come back from the restroom and wondered about his relationship with the girl. If she was his girlfriend or fiancée or, God forbid at their young age, his wife. He didn't want to be obtrusive and strike up conversation. Most of Jared's existence was dedicated to trying not to offend anyone. He was with his girlfriend Christina for three rocky years before she finally dumped him because he couldn't bring himself to break her heart. He hoped the couple across the isle wasn't like that. The man seemed to be much more aggressive than Jared anyway. Jared was now remembering Christina and became so lost in his thoughts that the flight attendant had to ask him twice if he would like some tea or coffee. He said tea would be lovely, thank you, and she poured him a cup. He was about to ask the woman

next to him, but she was fast asleep, mouth slightly agape. The flight attendant said she'd be back around later if the old woman wanted anything. He sipped his tea and returned his thoughts to Christina, who seemed a lot nicer now that he wasn't dating her.

Agnes's heart stopped beating about fifteen minutes before a flight attendant came by to ask if the young business man would like some tea or coffee.

Lilly was so very, very bored. Everyone else on the plane was boring or busy or sleeping. The old lady sleeping kind of looked like her granny. Her granny also slept with her mouth open. Lilly would have asked the old lady to tell her a story, even if it made her mom scold her, she was that bored. But the woman was still sleeping, so Lilly didn't. She had begun coloring in a little booklet her mom brought with them. It was full of fairy tales. She only had five crayons, so all of the horses had to be yellow because there was no brown. Lilly was fine with this, because her hair was yellow and she didn't mind if her horses matched her. At one point, one of her crayons fell off of her lap. It was the red. She hadn't really needed the red for anything, but her mom gave her a look that told Lilly she had better go get that red crayon. She crawled onto the floor and reached under the sleeping lady's chair. Lilly touched the old woman's foot accidentally. It was as cold as ice. Then she found the crayon. When she returned to her seat, she flipped through her book to the old fairy Godmother. Lilly colored her blue.



Lilly's mother was glad that the old woman had stopped snoring. The noise had been droning on in the back of her mind as she rocked the baby. However, it didn't take much to aggravate this mother of two. Flying was nothing but stress and she highly doubted that she'd be enjoying their little "vacation." She wondered every day why she let her husband pressure her into having the girls. She was never really a fan of children and, although her Lilly was rather obedient, the child frazzled her nerves with her constant

questioning about the world. The mother looked again to the old woman, wondering how soon this mother of two would look as old and decrepit. She guessed probably before age forty.

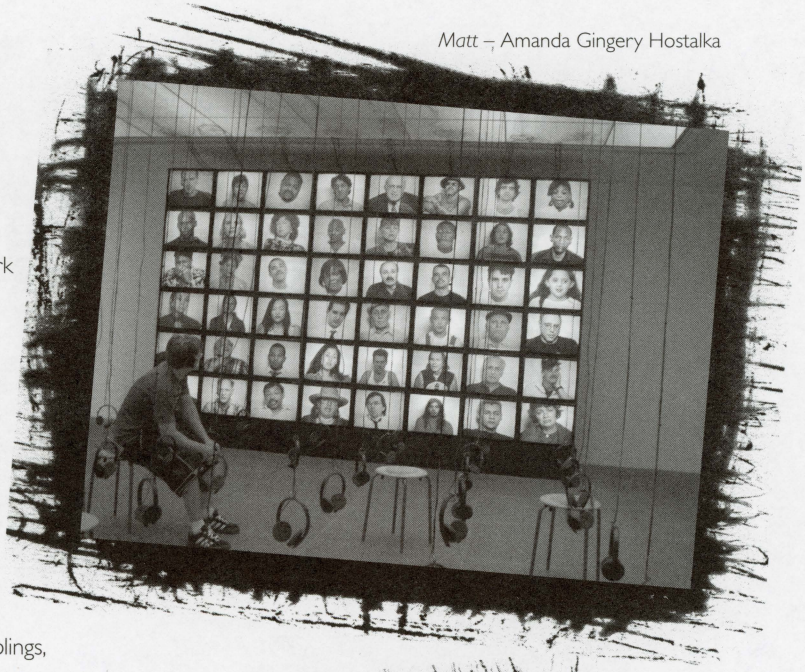
George commented on how old the mother of the brats already looked, all because of her children. Sandra chided him for speaking so loudly and rudely, although she agreed that the exhausted look upon the woman's face aged her a good ten years. Still, she knew Jared just didn't want to become an uncle any time soon. He had nothing to worry about, however, because her relationship with Steve was growing rocky. Seeing London wasn't the only reason she agreed to accompany her brother; it was a relief for her to be away from her needy beau. As the plane touched down, Sandra was thinking to herself about how she would focus on enjoying her time away while she had it. George was thinking about trying to beat the family with children off of the plane; he'd hate to be stuck behind them.

Jared was ready to depart the plane immediately but saw that the crossword woman was still sound asleep, her booklet curled up in her aged hands. He nudged her gently, not wanting to be a bother, but not wanting to leave her sound asleep on the plane. She didn't move at all. He loudly said something about the plane having arrived, but it was no use. An ominous feeling ran up his spine.

Lilly was watching all of this while she waited to be let off of the plane. She loudly asked her mother if the lady was dead. Her mother scolded her and turned from packing up their things to apologize for her daughter to the old woman she hoped to never look like. It was then that she saw the woman's gray complexion and lips tinged slightly blue. Her nerves stretched to the breaking point, the sight of the dead woman, coupled with the realization that she had been on a plane with a dead body, pushed the mother of two over the edge. She screamed and spun away, pressing her hands to her temples, last vestiges of sanity leaving her, along with baby Sarah, who she had been carrying. The infant dropped helplessly from her arms over the isle. Her last ounce of energy having left her, the woman collapsed on the exact spot the baby would have fallen if child-loathing George hadn't reached out to catch it.

The plane was a sea of confusion, everyone trying to get away from the body of the old woman and being obstructed by the mother who had screamed and fainted in the isle. And yet, Sandra turned calmly to her brother, his eyes wide as he pressed the bawling child to his chest protectively; "It's going to be okay," she told him, and she knew it would be.

Christine Ivory



Matt – Amanda Gingery Hostalka

The Future

He will work with his hands
I will have a garden
He will come home in his Levi's
And lumberjack shirt after a hard day's work
And I will have supper ready
In our cozy little home.
We can't afford much,
But we'll get by just fine
Sharing a slice of apple pie.

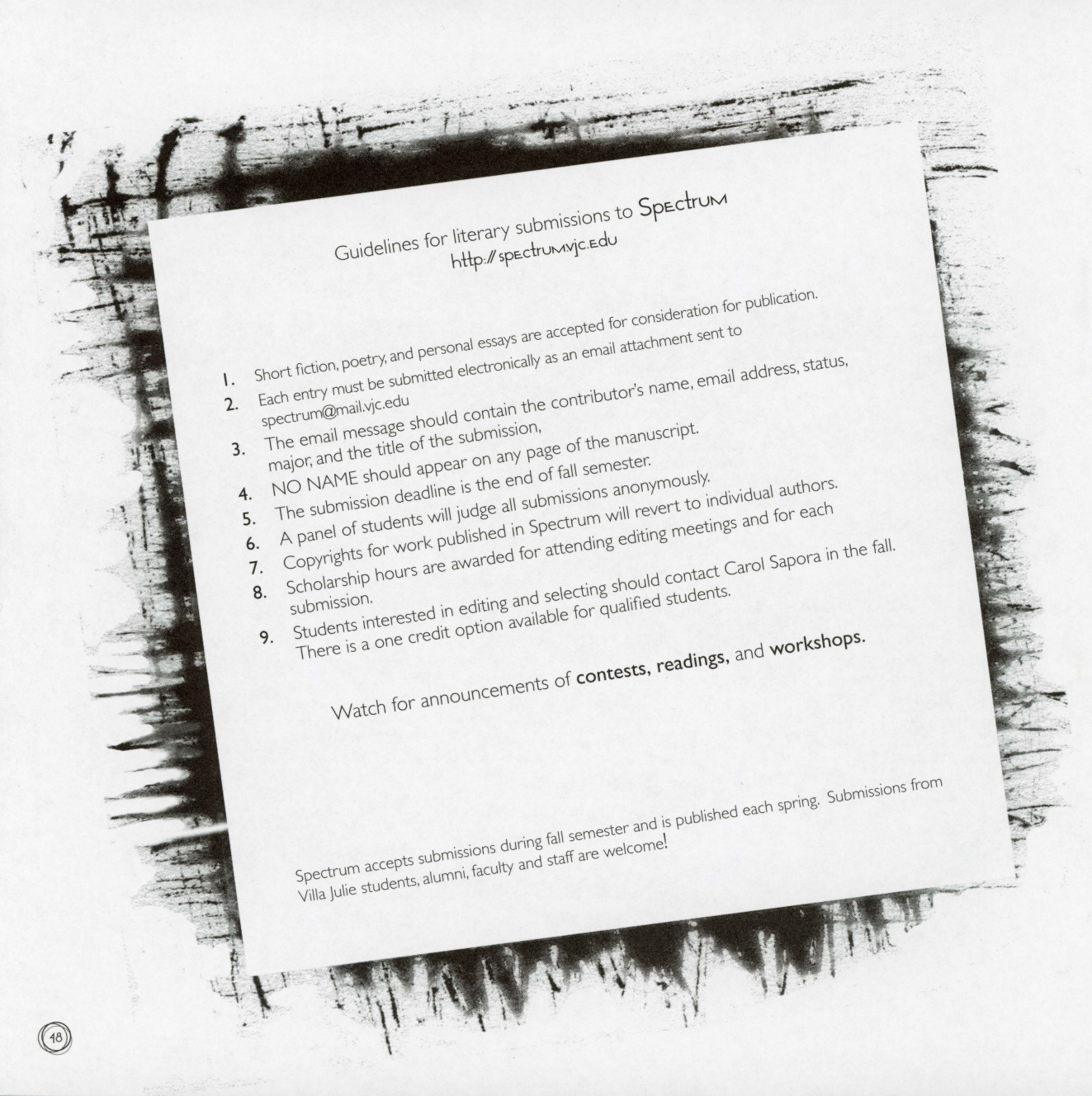
He will work on the seventeenth floor,
I will drive an SUV.
He will come home in his Dockers
And leave to go golfing in a light Polo.
I will get my nails done
And go shopping to fill the voids
in our house, surrounded by its fraternal siblings,
on a clean and quiet cul-de-sac.
We'll need Hawaii to make us
Fall in love again.

Best of all, we stay ourselves—
Two people safe from the world together.
I will make the bacon and potatoes
And he will scramble the eggs
Wearing our pajamas and
Staying in on Sunday.
Curled up in front of the TV,
My head nestled on his chest
A kiss on the forehead
And a light shared breath.

Stefani Beser

Pink Pony – Jessica Winters

The Rushing Gunpowder – Heather Naff



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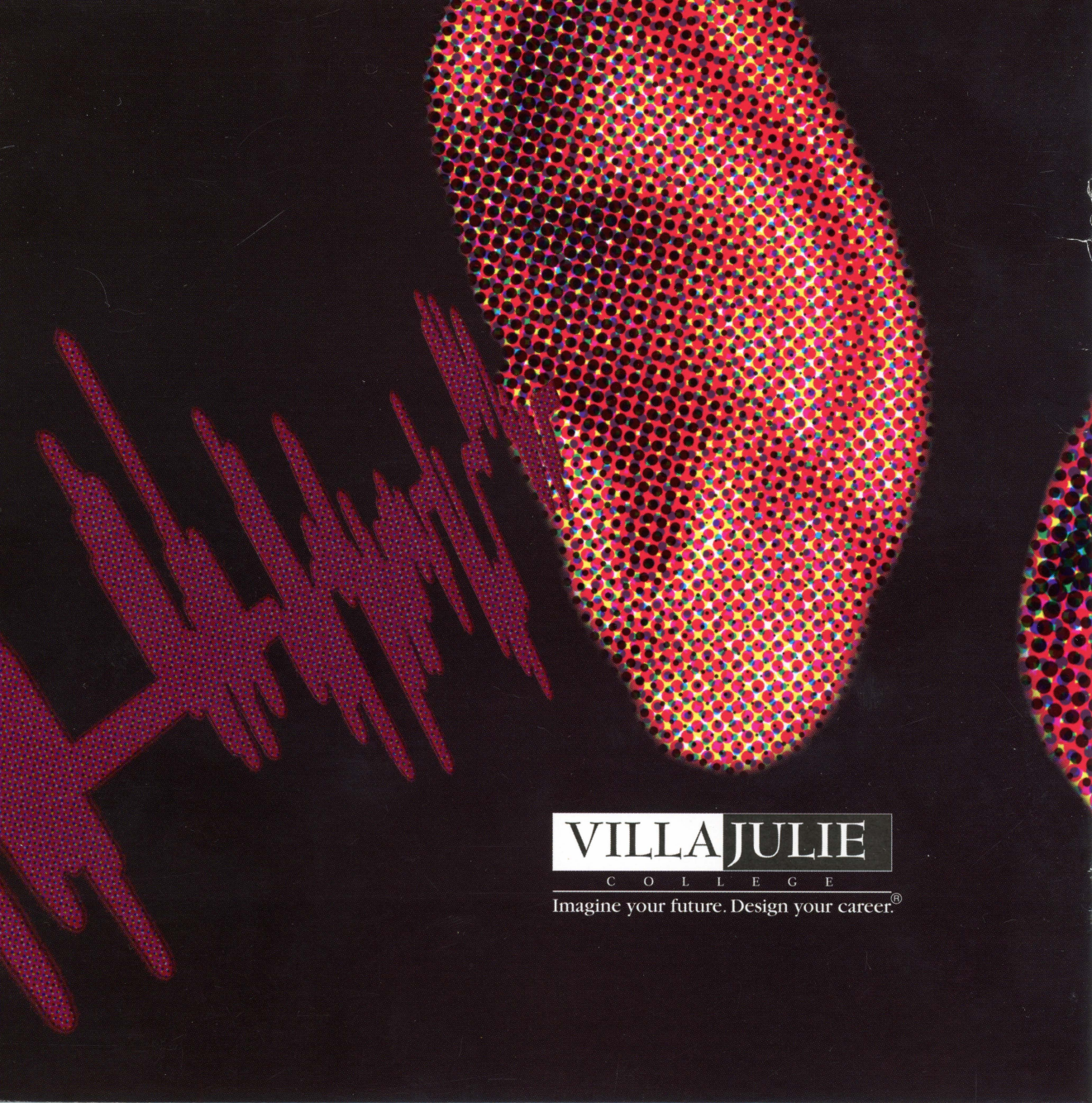
http://spectrum.vjc.edu

1. Short fiction, poetry, and personal essays are accepted for consideration for publication.
2. Each entry must be submitted electronically as an email attachment sent to spectrum@mail.vjc.edu
3. The email message should contain the contributor's name, email address, status, major, and the title of the submission,
4. NO NAME should appear on any page of the manuscript.
5. The submission deadline is the end of fall semester.
6. A panel of students will judge all submissions anonymously.
7. Copyrights for work published in Spectrum will revert to individual authors.
8. Scholarship hours are awarded for attending editing meetings and for each submission.
9. Students interested in editing and selecting should contact Carol Sapora in the fall. There is a one credit option available for qualified students.

Watch for announcements of **contests, readings,** and **workshops.**

Spectrum accepts submissions during fall semester and is published each spring. Submissions from Villa Julie students, alumni, faculty and staff are welcome!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